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SOVIET ORDERS OUT 5 U.S. DIPLOMATS ON SPYING CHARGES

By SERGE SCHMEMANN

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MOSCOW, Oct. 19 — The Soviet Union ordered five American diplomats out of the country today for engaging in "impermissible activities," the diplomatic formula for spying, the press agency Tass reported.

A spokesman for the United States Embassy confirmed the action but declined to comment.

The Soviet move marked the largest number of American diplomats ever expelled at the same time by Moscow. Western diplomats said they presumed the action was taken in retaliation for Washington's order on Sept. 17 that 25 diplomats at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations who were identified as intelligence agents must leave the United States.

[In Washington, Secretary of State George P. Shultz said the United States would retaliate against the Soviet order.]

Deadline for Russians

Today was the deadline set by the Reagan Administration for the departure of the last of the 25 Soviet officials, although a Soviet spokesman said Thursday that all 25 had already left.

Moscow's action today contrasted with its conciliatory gestures last week, when two Jewish couples whose cases were well publicized in the West were allowed to emigrate. Diplomats said they saw the expulsions today as a signal that although Mikhail S. Gorbachev was prepared to show flexibility on some fronts, he would not let the measures against the United Nations diplomats go unanswered.

Although the number of Americans expelled was only a fifth as large as the number of Russians ordered out, diplomats noted that the Soviet Union maintains many more officials in the United States than vice-versa.

4 Had Diplomatic Rank

Four of the five Americans ordered out by Moscow today had diplomatic rank at the United States Embassy. They were William Norville, a first secretary; Charles Ehrenfried, a third secretary; and Gary Lonnquist and David Harris, both attachés. The fifth was Jack Roberts, listed as a member of the consular staff at the United States Consulate in Leningrad.

The United States Embassy did not list the specific assignments of the five officials, and it was not immediately known how soon they would have to leave the Soviet Union.

The Tass dispatch reporting the expulsions made no reference to the ouster of the Russians from New York.

But Moscow had warned that it would retaliate immediately after the State Department issued its expulsion order on Sept. 17. The order came at the height of the standoff over the detention in Moscow of Nicholas S. Daniloff, an American journalist, and the detention in New York of Gennadi F. Zakharov, a Soviet official at the United Nations.

There was speculation at the time that Washington's action, which was taken on the eve of the arrival of Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze in Washington for talks with Secretary of State George P. Shultz, was intended to put additional pressure on Moscow to release Mr. Daniloff, a reporter for U.S. News & World Report.

Washington said the expulsion of the 25 diplomats was in connection with an order issued earlier in the year by Washington that Moscow curtail its diplomatic staff at the United Nations. The Reagan Administration had asserted that the United Nations was used by many officials as a cover for spying. The Soviet Mission was told to cut its staff from 279 to 218 by Oct. 1.

That was also the original deadline set by the State Department for the departure of the 25 diplomats. But the day before the deadline, Washington and Moscow announced the resolution of the Daniloff affair along with the surprise decision to have President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev meet in Iceland.

The question of the United Nations expulsions was postponed until the summit meeting. But the Reagan Administration subsequently reaffirmed its order, moving the deadline back, and a Soviet official reaffirmed that Moscow would retaliate.

Moscow declined to contest the expulsions through United Nations channels and withdrew the 25 officials, although a Soviet spokesman in Moscow said the move was part of a routine rotation.

According to the United States Embassy spokesman, a diplomat was summoned to the Foreign Ministry in the afternoon and advised of the action.

Tass said a statement was made to the embassy on the "impermissibility of the activities" of the five officials. The terse report said that a "firm protest" was lodged with the embassy and that "the attention of the U.S. Embassy was again drawn to facts of the continuing use of American diplomatic missions in the U.S.S.R. for illegal activities against the Soviet Union, and the demand was made that appropriate measures be taken for stopping them."

Tass made no specific charges against the five Americans, as it has on most previous occasions when United States diplomats were expelled, adding to the impression that the move was a retaliatory one.

The last time an American diplomat was expelled — Erik Sites, an attaché, on May 14 — Tass described how he had been seized on a Moscow street while holding a "secret meeting" with a Soviet contact.

A Flurry of Activity

The expulsion of the American diplomats contributed to the fast and often confusing flurry of activity in Soviet-American relations in the last two months. The activity has included the confrontation over the arrest of Mr. Daniloff, the hasty and dramatic summit meeting in Iceland and the release of several Soviet dissidents by Moscow.

Mr. Daniloff was arrested and charged with spying on Aug. 30, a week after Mr. Zakharov, a Soviet scientist working on the United Nations staff, was arrested in New York and charged with spying. The arrest of the American journalist was widely seen as a move to compel the Americans to release Mr. Zakharov.

The case was resolved, apparently in a deal, when Mr. Daniloff was expelled, Mr. Zakharov pleaded "no contest" to the charges in a Brooklyn court and was freed to return home, and Moscow also released a prominent dissident, Yuri F. Orlov, who had been in exile in Siberia.

That cleared the way for Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev to meet in Iceland, a summit meeting at which the leaders reached several broad agreements on arms controls but failed to agree on space-based defense systems. The Russians insisted that Mr. Reagan curtail his Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly called the "Star Wars" program, but the President refused.

After the summit meeting, Moscow moved to resolve two prominent human-rights cases, releasing an ailing Jewish geneticist, David Goldfarb, and giving exit permission to Viktor and Inessa Flerov, who had sought to leave for Israel so that Mrs. Flerov could donate bone marrow to her brother, who has leukemia.

Mr. Gorbachev, however, has been tough in responding to actions taken against Soviet officials abroad.

Shultz Warns of Retaliation

WASHINGTON, Oct. 19 (Reuters) — Secretary of State Shultz said today that the United States would retaliate against the Soviet Union for its expulsion of five American diplomats.

"We will protest, and we will take some action," Mr. Shultz said on the NBC News program "Meet the Press."

Asked what form the United States retaliation would take, he replied, "That remains to be seen."

"The President will consult," he said, "and he'll decide."